Paradigms of Postmodern Democracies

Mehdi Ghasemi[1] iD

Abstract

Postmodernism has served as a turning point in the human evolution of thought, and thus, it has challenged a number of assumptions central to social, political, historical, cultural, and literary fields. Accordingly, postmodernism has not left the study of democracy untouched, and in this essay, I aim to study the ways that postmodernism has affected the political, social, and literary democracies. To this end, I develop a conceptual comparative study of postmodernism and democracy with a focus on their overlaps and drawbacks. The comparative study of postmodernism and democracy opens up the space for the introduction of "postmodern democracies" as more inclusive, collective, and comprehensive frameworks of democracy.

Keywords

postmodernism, postmodern democracies, literary democracy, liberal democracy, post-democracy, participatory democracy

Postmodernism has served as a turning point in the human evolution of thought, and thus, it has challenged a number of assumptions central to social, political, historical, cultural, and literary fields. Accordingly, postmodernism has not left the study of democracy untouched, and in this essay, I aim to study the ways that postmodernism has affected the political, social, and literary democracies. To this end, I develop a conceptual comparative study of postmodernism and democracy with a focus on their overlaps and drawbacks. The comparative study of postmodernism and democracy opens up the space for the introduction of "postmodern democracies" as more inclusive, collective, and comprehensive frameworks of democracy.

As the point of departure, postmodernism favors the diversity of human experiences, values, cultures, and identities, and thus, it critiques totality and universality. According to Ellen Meiksins Wood (1997), postmodernism is characterized by "an emphatic rejection of 'totalizing' knowledge and of 'universalistic' values" (p. 6) to free thoughts from meta-narratives and welcome the arrival of mininarratives that are provisional, contingent, and relational. Like postmodernism, social and political democracies, which propagate equality of individuals and accordingly embrace their votes equally, allow multiple mininarratives and alternative voices to arise and decide who should represent them, and each and every voice and vote counts. This is an effort to resist monophony and monopoly of power systems and to create pluralistic polyphony, or in Ihab Hassan's (1970) term "multi-vocation" (p. 91).

Since postmodernism and democracy have the potential to replace the monolithic voice of the absolute power, embodied in a person or a group, with plural voices of members of a society, it can be said that they both have a decisive

political agenda to create incredulity toward the dominant orders of autocracy. With their attention to plurality of cultures and identities, postmodernism and democracy recognize and critique essentialism, which works to reduce people of one society and even the whole world to only one way of being. I argue that the critique of essentialism provides the ground for postmodernism and democracy to set the stage for all members of societies to subvert the essentialist power systems, determine their own favorite socio-political democracies and freely criticize their trends. By contrast, the unilateral pattern or mono-directional nature of autocracy functions to maintain hegemonic relations of power and leaves no room for people to express their own views and criticisms against ruling systems of power.

In addition to critiquing autocracy, democracy and postmodernism rebuke common people and their role in maintaining and supporting power systems of such types. In this regard, Jean Baudrillard (1994) remarks that "one can always ask of the traditional holders of power where they get their power from. Who made you duke? The king. Who made you king? God. Only God no longer answers. But to the question: who made you a psycho-analyst? the analyst can well reply: You" (p. 41). Baudrillard's remarks mean that "people play a crucial role in maintaining autocracy, the system of power, which is not God-given," and he "ironically targets peoples' ignorance and passivity, which result in the continuation of despotism" (Ghasemi, 2016a, p. 838). "Thus, people can

---
[1]Finnish Literature Society (SKS), Finland

Corresponding Author:
Mehdi Ghasemi, Research Department, Finnish Literature Society (SKS), PL 259, 00171 Helsinki, Finland.
Email: mehdi.ghasemi@finlit.fi

pave the way for either democracy with their wisdom or autocracy with their own folly" (p. 838). This is to approach autocracy with postmodern democratic eyes, which due to their insistence on discontinuity, challenge the legitimacy of autocracy and its permanent and continuous occupation of power. In this light, postmodernism and democracy can question the faith in traditional conceptions of ruling systems, place them in doubt and flux, and encourage further social and political reformation.

However, the acknowledgment of postmodernist and democratic themes is not the same as to accept their assumptions as total. From an opposite perspective, if represented as centered, unified, and total, postmodernism and democracy also have the potential to form another totalizing and universal system. The majority vote per se can shape a grand narrative, denying minority views and rights, and by questioning and rejecting other -isms, postmodernism and democracy can represent themselves as another final and decisive -ism. Terry Eagleton (1997) holds that postmodernist culture "has pulled the rug out from beneath a number of complacent certainties . . . and shaken some rather solid-looking foundations"; however, "in pulling the rug out from under the certainties of its political opponents," postmodern culture has to pull it out from under itself, too (p. 24). This is to say that if postmodernism and democracy refuse to self-criticize their own agendas, they will reconcile themselves to other grand narratives, and then, they seek to impose their own peculiar agendas on the rest of the world as total and universal. Consequently, new forms of monopoly are formed, which contradict the main objectives of democracy and postmodernism—seeking for emancipation from absolutism, authority, essentialism, continuity, and closure.

In his book, *Post-Democracy*, British sociologist Colin Crouch outlines the current stage of democracy in Western societies and provides readers with a critique of some of the grand narratives of modern Western democracies. Crouch's notion of "post-democracy" depicts the current crisis of democracy in some Western societies and draws our attention to a number of recognized democracies, including liberal democracy, which are increasingly becoming a formal shell. According to Crouch (2004), although Western societies maintain the façade of democracy, these societies "are increasingly slipping back into the control of privileged elites" (p. 6). Crouch further explains post-democracy as follows:

> The idea of post-democracy helps us describe situations when boredom, frustration and disillusion have settled in after a democratic moment; when powerful minority interests have become far more active than the mass of ordinary people in making the political system work for them; where political elites have learned to manage and manipulate popular demands; where people have to be persuaded to vote by top-down publicity campaigns. This is not the same as non-democracy, but describes a period in which we have, as it were, come out the other side of the parabola of democracy. (pp. 19-20)

These are also the symptoms of the "elite democracy," in which a number of politicians or countries, as "privileged elites," wish to impose their own views to others, both inside and outside their own nation states. This way, democracy moves toward social and political marginalization and loses its desirability to subjects who lead different ways of living.

Michael Augustin (2017) believes that "Post-democracy can be perceived *neutrally* as a political opportunity for the establishment of a *genuine* democracy or as an opportunity to go beyond democracy and bring *a whole* new system of governance of human society" (p. 108, emphases added). Unlike Augustin, I believe that in his book *Post-democracy*, Crouch does not seek to introduce a neutral genuine model of democracy, acceptable for human society as a completely new system of governance, since the plurality and diversity that exist in human societies do not allow the implementation of one particular model of democracy. Based on this argument, if one particular model of democracy proclaims to be privileged, it would become narrow and exclusive with time and face some challenges arising out of the "conflicting demands of multicultural societies, the phenomenon of 'identity politics' and its sometimes divisive and particularist appeals to citizens, and, more generally from postmodern skepticism about universal foundations" (Blaug & Schwarzmantel, 2001, p. 2). This trend not only limits the scope of democracy in the national and international scales but also creates a legitimacy crisis for democracy.

Daniele Conversi (2006) refers to such a crisis as "demo-skepticism," "the very fact that we begin to feel that we no longer live in 'democratic' societies" (p. 257). Conversi also explores "deep-reaching democracy" verses "majoritarian democracy." While the former form of democracy "enshrin[es] multiculturalism and the protection of minority rights" (p. 256) and "sustain[s] ethnic and cultural diversity" (Conversi, 2012, p. 791), the latter as a "homogeneous form of democracy" undermines diversity and minority rights (p. 798). Conversi truly sees majoritarian democracy as an obstacle on the way of plural vision and a facilitator for "populist rule, which is in itself an intrinsic threat to vulnerable ethnic, class and cultural minorities" (p. 802). He also addresses majoritarian democracy, "derived from the erstwhile European nation-state models," along with neoliberal democracy, "derived from US-led globalization," "adverse and inimical to cultural diversity," believing that the two models have the potential to intermingle and generate "even greater forms of instability and homogenization" (p. 801). Building on Conversi's arguments, I argue that democracy is not limited to one particular era and area, and thus, the prescription of one single rigid democratic model for the whole entire world, regardless of their differences, would make some groups and nation states alienated from the dominant represented universal model of democracy. Relativism holds that the values, beliefs, standards, and principles of societies differ, and thus, all societies should not be expected to apply a uniform model of democracy.

Another key point to remember is that nowadays, due to the ongoing waves of immigration, lack of citizenship has become a challenge to democracy in several multicultural countries. Lack of citizenship, which can be interpreted as lack of belonging, would prevent some immigrants, including those immigrated to study and work, asylum seekers and refugees, from voting and contributing in policymaking. In some European countries, such as Switzerland, it takes more than a decade for some immigrants to receive citizenship. Yet in another example, about 400,000 people of 5,500,000 population of Finland are immigrants; however, more than 80% of them, due to lack of citizenship, are not eligible to vote in parliamentary and presidential elections. A recent study by Merja Jutila Roon (2017) shows that of 20% of immigrants in Finland, who are eligible to vote, less than 20% exercise their right to vote. Roon sees the low level of immigrants' participation in elections as a metric for measuring the success of immigrants' integration in the Finnish society. Vijay Mishra (2012), however, views multiculturalism as a "structure of control" for minorities without being able to leave a particular impression on the majoritarian (p. 37). This is in contrast with "participatory democracy," advocating the broad participation of citizens of one nation state in decision making and striving to encourage all members of a country to take part in democratic process. This also reveals that even some recognized models of democracy in several multicultural societies have failed to find an optimum way for the legal possibility of their residents' maximum participation in decision making. Despite this, they tend to be universally embraced.

Ricardo Blaug and John Schwarzmantel (2001) liken democratic theory to "a 'language game' played in a particular local environment, that of the West," adding that "The claim that such values are universal may be mistaken" (p. 3). Blaug and Schwarzmantel then add, "We cannot merely read off the meaning of democracy from the existing practices of liberal-democracy" (p. 9). This argument is based on the fact that liberal democracy has failed to "provide a recipe for the prevention and resolution of ethno-national conflicts" (Conversi, 2006, p. 257) and to "replace heterogeneity with homogeneity that has led to the greatest tragedies of the past century" (Conversi, 2008, p. 165). Conversi (2008) later defines homogenization as "an artificial, state-mandated, top-down attempt to impose a homogeneous culture upon a heterogeneous population" (p. 168). Thus, seeking for homogeneity and universality prevents heterogeneous societies that are comprised of cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity to embrace liberal democracy. Owing to its great influence and power, liberal democracy aims to replace all other political systems in the world and to reduce the varied complexity of human experience to a monolithic view of the world. The advocates of this allegedly universal democratic model denigrate countries that practice other models of democracy. As Bhikhu Parekh (2001) writes,

Millions in non-Western societies demand democracy, albeit in suitably indigenized forms, whereas they tend to shy away from liberalism as if they instinctively felt it to be subversive of what they most valued and cherished. . .; [those] countries feel that the liberal view of the world and way of life is at odds with their deepest aspirations and self-conceptions. As they understand it, liberalism breaks up the community, undermines the shared body of ideas and values, places the isolated individual above the community, encourages the ethos and ethnic of aggressive self-assertion, rejects traditional wisdom and common sense in the name of scientific reason, and weakens the spirit of mutual accommodation and adjustment. (p. 427)

By the same token, the former prime minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad, proposed the idea of "Malaysian democracy," which was based on Malay-Islamic culture, including feudalism, Islam, and Malay traditions. He rebutted the Western liberal notion of democracy, believing that it corrupts Malaysian culture and religious beliefs. Mahathir (1995) insisted that "Malaysian democracy is not liberal democracy" and "not bound to accept every new interpretation of democracy in the West" (p. 46). He found it incredulous that all nations should implement democracy according to the Western definition of democracy, since, as he notes, "Westerners cannot seem to understand diversity" (Mahathir & Ishihara, 1995, p. 75). He then concluded that Western liberal democracy is not worth following, adding that the fortunes and fates of each nation should be determined by its own values.

It is worth noting that a number of countries have "forced religion to adapt itself to the political symbolic code of democratization," while some others have "allowed religion to have autonomy" "by separating it from the political arena" (Donati, 2001, p. 309). In a number of other religious countries, however, religion claims greater relevance in relation to the social and political domains and requires a new relationship with democracy. Some of those religious countries grant freedom of expression to their citizens, but they never stand any sacrilege of religious rituals and beliefs. In such a diverse world, democracy should guarantee the maintenance of each nation state's values, and different nation states should determine their own forms of democracy. As Parekh (2001) argues, "[some countries] may choose liberal democracy, but if they do not, their choice deserves respect and even encouragement. After all, liberals have always held, and rightly, that diversity is the precondition of progress and choice, and that truth can only emerge from a peaceful competition between different ways of life" (p. 429). Thus, if democracy would like to include the excluded canons, be more inclusive, collective, and comprehensive and pass to other regions, it should be anti-universalist and free itself from the grip of liberal democracy, which seeks for universalism. According to Anne Phillips (2001), "One critique of universalism is that it looks to a common core of humanity behind all the (supposedly contingent) differences of class,

gender, ethnicity, religion or race, and that in doing so it tends to equate equality with sameness" (p. 2). Later, Phillips adds, "cultures are not monolithic, are always in the process . . ., and are never immune to change" (p. 5). In line with this undertaking, if we wish democracy to grow, it should avoid narrowing itself to one particular universal model, recognize the values of different societies and provide each society to formulate alternative norms and forms of democracy based on their own orientations.

Here, I argue that democracy is a process, which is never completed, and no one single model of it is wholesome. Democracy should also have the courage to question itself, which makes it kaleidoscopic, situational, and contradictory. In consequence, there is no one single fixed democracy or "democracy of being," but miscellaneous democracies or "democracies of becoming," which I identify as "postmodern democracies" in this essay. Democracies of becoming or postmodern democracies can be likened to chess games, wherein players have the possibilities to make various choices and moves, and with each choice and move a new paradigm opens up before them, whereas democracy of being can be likened to a puzzle, wherein solvers have only a single fixed position for each piece.

Robert Dahl (1989) writes that the establishment of democratic rule in large nation states was the great transformation of modernity (p. 23). Unlike Dahl, I claim that the questioning of democratic rule established by large nation states would be the great transformation of postmodernity. Hence, in postmodernity, each nation state would design and implement a democratic model to recognize its own social, political, cultural, and economic orientations. According to Henry W. Ehrmann (1965), "the vitality of an institution can be measured by its ability to adapt to the changing times and to incorporate its dynamic forces into the living community" (p. 7). In my opinion, since postmodern democracies ebb and flow, they have the potential to the changing times and identities of different societies. Consequently, they can be modified and reused by different nations and generations. Here, I should note that postmodern democracies do not seek to form a wide worldview or "Weltanschauung." Rather, they observe locality and plurality of cultures, beliefs, and identities at different eras and areas, and accordingly, postmodern democracies oppose uniformity and formation of a unified universal model of democracy for the whole entire world.

Like social and political democracies, literary democracies attempt to open up the space for the expression of readers' views and criticisms through their participation in interpreting texts in any way they wish. Similarly, postmodernism featured in literary democracies is participatory, and accordingly, it invites readers to decide over the interpretations of texts, and in some cases, they are required to fill in the gaps which exist in texts. Authors surrender the control of their own texts to readers who are invited to fill in the gaps in any way they best see fit. Thus, the gaps give readers significant power over literary works and their interpretations. This

makes a transition from having passive readers to readers as active agents who can function as co-producers of works. Naturally, readers' interpretations may differ from one another, simply because each reader, affected by their ethnicity, gender, and class as well as their religious, political, and cultural orientations, approaches texts differently.

Furthermore, as a way to acquire freedom from the bonds of cliché conventions, postmodern literary democracies—as a set of critical, rhetorical, and strategic practices—free themselves from the conventional narrative forms and reject any totalizing view of writing. To this end, postmodern literary democracies use a wide range of devices and techniques to transform both the forms and contents of texts and destabilize the dominant concepts, including authenticity, epistemic certainty, historical progress, linearity, presence, stability, univocal identity, and univocity of meaning. In addition, since postmodern literary democracies maintain that there exists no absolute truth, they follow that there exists no basis for absolute meaning; rather, meanings are individually or socially constructed. This implies that there exist plurality of readings and interpretations, and the interests of individuals, groups, and nations can play a crucial part in forming their readings and interpretations. This is because postmodern literary democracies see narrative structures as linguistic constructs of man-made discourses, which are not given or natural. These constructs and discourses—which consist of sets of words, selected, assembled, and emplotted by writers into narratives with plots—include some devices that make the texts and their interpretations contradictory, ironical, and paradoxical. Likewise, there is no one single agreed meaning for democracy that would be universally valid.

Postmodernism also looks for the death of centers, "from the 'death of god' to the 'death of the author' and 'death of the father'" (Hassan, 1986, p. 505). As a result of the "death of the author," postmodern literary democracies present a redefinition of the functions of readers, who are no longer accounted as mere agents controlled by authors, and thus, they no longer correspond to their conventional functions. For the same reason, contexts, dialogues, and communications in postmodern literary works are subverted, and the application of innovative techniques are interpreted and implemented differently by different readers. In this intellectual climate, readers are freed from the imagined authority of authors. The utilization of various techniques shows the flexibility and fluidity of postmodern literary democracies where some of the decisions over texts are left open, and this creates "impersonalism," implying "a 'disconnection' of author from work" (Caramello, 1983, p. 25). In this light, postmodern literary democracies favor de-centralization of authors and require participation of each and every reader in the construction of meanings. With these qualities, postmodernism featured in literary democracies results in the production of "writerly texts" or "texts of bliss" rather than "readerly texts" or "texts of pleasure" (Barthes,

1974). Consequently, in postmodern literary democracies, the stable meaning of readerly texts is replaced by a proliferation of meanings.

The plurality of readings and meanings makes postmodern literary democracies dynamic, swinging nonstop between poles of "making" and "unmaking," "presentation" and "representation," and "signifier" and "signified," generating interpretations and simultaneously challenging the interpretations they have just generated (Ghasemi, 2016b, pp. 19-20). As Hutcheon (1993) writes, "postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges" (p. 243). Because of plural interpretations, texts withdraw closure. In this climate, "indeterminacies"—which according to Hassan (1986) "include all manner of ambiguities, ruptures, and displacements affecting knowledge and society . . . and pervade our actions, ideas, interpretations" (pp. 504-505)—are unsatisfying to those who seek clarity, linearity, and final meaning. Under these circumstances, literary works are structured in a complex organization in which the texts are plural and indeterminate and require readers to engage in performing duets with the texts, and each reader plays their part based on their orientations and experience.

To make texts plural and indeterminate, postmodern literary democracies avoid cliché styles of writing and employ various innovative devices and techniques to, for instance, deconstruct the linearity and create atemporality. Consequently, "time no longer presents a progressive coherent linear movement, and it intermingles past, present and future" (Ghasemi, 2016b, p. 20). As the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1996) writes, "time is no longer a river, but a collection of ponds and pools" (p. 25). "It is repeated, revised, slowed down, accelerated, halted, stretched, and so on, which results in the creation of omnitemporality and time distortion" (Ghasemi, 2016b, p. 20). Like time, place may turn into a multiperspectival space. Thus, the fluidity of time and place in texts shatters the norms of logic and enhances indeterminacies. Moreover, indeterminacies in texts can be catalyzed with linguistic plurality and polyvocality, originating from the infinite play between the signifiers and the signifieds as well as the use of wordplays, puns, technical vocabularies, and different languages. In this way, postmodern literary democracies not only enhance indeterminacies but also blur the defined boundaries between high and low discourses.

All in all, the aforementioned features are some of the common hallmarks of postmodernism and social, political, and literary democracies, which I have traced in this essay. Based on these common hallmarks, I suggest postmodern democracies as more inclusive, collective, and comprehensive frameworks of democracy. Postmodern democracies imply that there is no one single truth; rather, there are multiple truths and ways of understanding the world. Postmodern democracies work to dismantle fixity of any type—form, meaning, value, system, center, ideology, etc.—and to create incredulity toward the outworn ideologies and metanarratives, which attempt to maintain fixity. They also function to open up a wide field for the creation of fluidity through respecting individuals and their mini-narratives and for the glorification of pluralism and multivocation. To this effect, postmodern democracies reject the dominance of one single form of democracy and open the space for all societies to choose their own models of democracy that suit them the most and catalyze participation of individuals to ensure pluralism. This would not be possible for postmodern democracies without acknowledging the situations of the marginal and minority, showing penchant for the revival of neglected and repressed discourses, granting voices to others, and blurring the defined boundaries between high and low discourses. The legacy of postmodern democracies confronts the ravages of one single total genuine discourse and its highly totalizing and essentializing impulses, which acknowledge the blunt revival of differences.

However, if postmodern democracies per se become a grand narrative, they are no longer a remedy but a disease. In other words, if postmodern democracies claim an essentialist and universal stance, offer a prescriptive fixed confined model for all countries and nations, regardless of their cultural, social, economic, political, and religious paradigms, and impose themselves as one single version on the plural world, they go against the grain of anti-essentialist, anti-universalist, and relativistic approaches. Under these circumstances, through acknowledging cultural, social, economic, political, and religious differences, which exist among societies, rather than excluding and silencing them, postmodern democracies welcome diverse dynamic local paradigmatic models. This way postmodern democracies would serve as inclusive, collective, and comprehensive models; models that recognize values, plurality of cultures and diversity of identities of all societies; models that constantly review and self-criticize their own principles and policies and regularly update them to meet with the requirements of broad masses; and models that are flexible and adaptable to any society and generation. While "participatory democracy" advocates the broad participation of citizens of one nation state in decision making and strives to encourage all members to take part in democracy, postmodern democracies advocate the broad participation of nation states in democratic processes and encourage all countries to adopt democracy based on their own requirements, while maintaining their different orientations and perspectives.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

ORCID iD

Mehdi Ghasemi [iD] https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3414-5318

References

Augustin, M. (2017). How to escape from the dead end of post-democracy? Representation and principle of popular sovereignty. *Filosofický Časopis, Special Issue*, *1*, 93-111.

Barthes, R. (1974). *S/Z*. (R. Miller, Trans.). New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and simulation* (S. F. Glaser, Trans.). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Bauman, Z. (1996). From pilgrim to tourist—Or a short history of identity. In S. Hall & P. du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (pp. 18-36). London, England: Sage.

Blaug, R., & Schwarzmantel, J. (2001). *Democracy: A reader*. Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press.

Caramello, C. (1983). *Silverless mirror: Book, self and postmodern American fiction*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

Conversi, D. (2006). Demo-skepticism and genocide. *Political Studies Review*, *4*, 247-262.

Conversi, D. (2008). Democracy, nationalism and culture: A social critique of liberal monoculturalism. *Sociology Compass*, *2*, 156-182.

Conversi, D. (2012). Majoritarian democracy and globalization versus ethnic diversity? *Democratization*, *19*, 789-811.

Crouch, C. (2004). *Post-democracy*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Dahl, R. A. (1989). *Democracy and its critics*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Donati, P. (2001). Religion and democracy in the post-modern world: The possibility of a "religiously qualified" public sphere. *Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences*, pp. 310-365. Retrieved from http://www.pass.va/content/dam/scienzesociali/pdf/acta6/acta6-donati.pdf

Eagleton, T. (1997). Where do postmodernists come from? In E. M. Wood & J. B. Foster (Eds.), *In defense of history: Marxism and the postmodern agenda* (pp. 17-25). New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.

Ehrmann, H. W. (1965). *Democracy in a changing society* (H. W. Ehrmann, Ed.). London, England: Pall Mall Press.

Ghasemi, M. (2016a). Wanted: Debt or alive in Suzan-Lori Parks's FA. *Journal of Black Studies*, *48*, 822-845.

Ghasemi, M. (2016b). *Quest/ion of identities in African American feminist postmodern drama: A study of selected plays by Suzan-Lori Parks*. Turku, Finland: Painosalama Oy.

Hassan, I. (1970). Frontiers of criticism: Metaphors of silence. *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *46*, 81-95.

Hassan, I. (1986). Pluralism in postmodern perspective. *Critical Inquiry*, *2*, 503-520.

Hutcheon, L. (1993). Beginning to theorize postmodernism. In J. Natoli & L. Hutcheon (Eds.), *A postmodern reader* (pp. 243-272). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Mahathir, M. (1995). *The Malaysian system of government*. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Prime Minister's Department.

Mahathir, M., & Ishihara, S. (1995). *The voice of Asia: Two leaders discuss the coming century* (F. Baldwin, Trans.). Tokyo, Japan: Kodansha.

Mishra, V. (2012). *What was multiculturalism? A critical perspective*. Melbourne, Australia: Melbourne University Press.

Parekh, B. (2001). The cultural particularity of liberal democracy. In R. Blaug & J. Schwarzmantel (Eds.), *Democracy: A reader* (pp. 424-429). Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press.

Phillips, A. (2001). Multiculturalism, universalism and the claims of democracy. *Gender Justice, Development and Rights*, *7*, 1-21.

Roon, M. J. (2017). *Study: Immigrant voters not getting enough election information*. Retrieved from https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/study_immigrant_voters_not_getting_enough_election_information/9481542

Wood, E. M. (1997). What is the "postmodern" agenda? In E. M. Wood & J. B. Foster (Eds.), *In defense of history: Marxism and the postmodern agenda* (pp. 1-16). New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.

Author Biography

Mehdi Ghasemi is a postdoctoral researcher at the Research Department of the Finnish Literature Society (SKS), Finland. He is also a postdoctoral researcher in the Plural Research Group at the University of Tampere and in the English Department at the University of Turku, Finland. He has already published five scholarly books, three fiction books in the hybrid genre of "noveramatry" (a combination of novel, drama, and poetry all in one line), and thirteen papers in peer-reviewed scholarly journals, including *Orbis Litterarum, Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, the *Journal of Black Studies*, the *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, the *European Journal of American Studies*, and *SAGE Open*.